



Good Day to You. A rhetorical question for you my listener friends. Are Queensland Government Ministers required to do their job or can they **devolve** major responsibility to others. You see, devolving duties is one thing but in my view you can't or shouldn't devolve or pass on fundamental responsibility. When the Ministers for Local Government past and present are sworn in they are required to swear an oath of allegiance and an oath to serve the people. Allow me to quote from the Queensland Constitution and the Minister for Local Government must swear, and I quote, to **"well and truly serve the people of Queensland in the office of Local Government".....So help me God!** Now that's pretty clear isn't it, well maybe not. You see this tricky and somewhat dumb Palaszczuk government and a few before it adopted a crude remote-control approach by devolving all accountability and responsibility to local Councils. This imbued Councils with so much power that the seeds of corruption have been nurtured in the State's south-east corner where many governance problems have emerged. It isn't the exchange of money in brown paper bags but a sophisticated network of favours with winks and nods a plenty to the detriment of the people.

For the last 5 years on 4CRB I have been trying to shine a light on the dubious workings of Gold Coast Council and I'm not on my own. However when you write to the Minister for Local Government, currently Stirling Hinchcliffe, you receive a letter back saying the matter is the responsibility of Council. Now in most cases the complaint being made is about a significant Council matter but in the end it is sent back to the Council to investigate itself. The drover's dog can see the problem with this and hence the mess on our doorstep. Have no doubt the under-resourced Triple C have been dragged kicking and screaming to confront the serious allegations of rampant corruption on an industrial scale. Clearly I am naive when surprised by senior people in society breaking the law, adopting unethical behaviour or breaking their oath of office.

Now devolution can be a worthy instrument if honesty and ethics prevail. In the UK the NAVCA group define the principles of devolution as creating a social economy for the people, a strong accountable voice for the community, local decision making and accountability and working with local organisations to transform public services. In fact they sound a lot like the defined principles of the Queensland Local Government Act which has all but been discarded by the Qld State government. Now to demonstrate just how devolution has utterly failed in Queensland look no further than the **Partners in Government Agreement** and the powerful Local Government Association of Queensland. The latter appears not to want ongoing auditing and screening of local Councils but even their CEO Greg Hallam says "it's ugly" and yet that group has far too much power through devolution in my view. Hallam speaks of natural justice for Councillors but appears to omit his predilection for natural justice, for the people. Mr Hallam, all that matters is the people, not bank balances nor devolved power nor political muscle, just the people. University of Queensland lecturer Cameron Murray says **"It's absolutely normal behaviour when you give a bunch of people a lot of power, they start taking advantage of it, they start forming their little cabals."** It might be predictable behaviour but its corrupt unacceptable behaviour and as Abraham Lincoln said **"if you want to test the character of a man then just give him power"**.

Timothy Prenzler, a criminologist at the University of the Sunshine Coast, believes the Triple C has to take some of the blame because he says **"Historically it hasn't investigated complaints about local government in any depth,"** and I would add it hasn't been proactive in hunting down crime. It also appears the State Government underfunds them. Now of late even Alan MacSporran the Chair of the Triple-C says that Local Government is **"a hot bed for perceived corruption"** but it took him until late last year to arrive at that conclusion. This is not just about developer donations it's about widespread and embedded corruption and far more. North Queensland grazier Jason Ward worked closely with former State member for Cairns the courageous Rob Pyne, in gathering evidence on allegations of corruption at Councils across Queensland. He has spent about \$750,000 of his own money setting up confidential support networks for Council staff who have attempted to blow the whistle. So addressing you directly Mr Hinchcliffe as Minister for Local Government, 'we the people' want you to take back control of Councils and banish the fatally flawed Partners in Government Agreement and do your job and meet your oath of office. No more Council secrecy please.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley